

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUWAIT 05265 171433Z

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4291

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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FROM REGIONAL LABOR ATTACHE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, KU, BA, QA, TC, MU, SA

SUBJECT: QATARI INITIATIVE FOR MANPOWER COOPERATION AMONG
GULF STATES

1. QATARI LABOR MINISTER ALI ANSARI, WHO IS PROBABLY THE
DEAN OF GULF ARAB LABOR MINISTERS IN TERMS OF MINISTRY
EXPERIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY, IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED
IN A SERIES OF VISITS TO OTHER GULF COUNTRIES TO SEEK
AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR REGIONAL COORDINATION OF MANPOWER
POLICIES AS A COUNTER TO SPREAD OF COMPETITIVE EFFORTS BY
GULF STATES TO RECRUIT SKILLED FOREIGNERS FROM EACH OTHER.
ANSARI'S ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE IS TO CONVENE MEETING OF GULF
LABOR MINISTERS AT WHICH DECISION TO COORDINATE MANPOWER
POLICIES WOULD BE TAKEN.

2. INTENSE RIVALRY FOR MANPOWER IS NATURAL OUTGROWTH OF
SKILLS SHORTAGES ALONG GULF, OF DEPENDENCE OF EACH STATE ON
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PAGE 02 KUWAIT 05265 171433Z

FOREIGN WORKERS (WHO MAKE UP LARGE MAJORITY OF LABOR FORCE

IN ALL STATES BUT BAHRAIN), AND OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR OUTBIDDING IN TERMS OF SALARY AND BENEFITS. THESE FACTORS, COUPLED WITH HISTORIC UNWILLINGNESS OF SEVERAL GULF STATES TO COORDINATE NATIONAL POLICIES, INDICATE THAT ANSARI HAS AN UPHILL TASK--EVEN THOUGH HIS IDEA IS TIMELY AND ECONOMICALLY CONSTRUCTIVE.

3. ANSARI OPENED HIS CAMPAIGN WITH AN EARLY DECEMBER STOP AT KUWAIT, WHERE OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN GROWING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER COUNTRY'S NET OUTFLOW OF FOREIGN WORKERS TO NEIGHBORING STATES, DESPITE CONTINUING LOCAL WAGE SPIRAL. KUWAITI LABOR MINISTER SHEIKH SALEM REPORTEDLY ENDORSED ANSARI'S PROPOSAL AND KUWAITI PRESS HAS LIBERALLY COMMENTED ON NEED FOR COMMON MANPOWER POLICY (EDITORIAL IN DECEMBER 15 KUWAIT TIMES WENT SO FAR AS TO CALL FOR GULF STATES TO FIX MANPOWER QUOTAS FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO "AVOID LARGE CONCENTRATIONS FROM SINGLE SOURCE IN GIVEN STATE AND BALANCE NATIONALITIES TO AVOID ANY UNHAPPY CONSEQUENCES IN FUTURE.").

4. EMBASSY PLANS TO SEND FOLLOW-UP REPORT ON KUWAITI REACTION TO ANSARI'S INITIATIVE AFTER LRO HAS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS DETAILS WITH LABOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS. RLA WOULD INVITE EMBASSY DOHA AND EMBASSIES IN OTHER GULF STATES ANSARI WILL BE VISITING TO COMMENT ON HIS INITIATIVE FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE. STOLTZFUS

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